

April 2009

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Dear District Government Agencies/Departments/Services/Programs:

Gustavo Velasquez
Director

On April 21, 2004, the District enacted a fundamental piece of civil rights legislation, the Language Access Act of 2004. The Act holds the District government accountable for providing equal access to and participation in programs, activities, and services for the city's limited- and non-English proficient (LEP/NEP) constituents. This month OHR will be celebrating the 5th Anniversary of the implementation of the Act.

As entities who are recipients of federal financial assistance, you are currently required to comply with various federal civil rights statutes, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended. Title VI provides that no person shall "*on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.*" The federal government and those receiving assistance from the federal government must take reasonable steps to ensure that persons with language barriers have meaningful access to services and information. Our law reflects the sentiments of the federal statute and designates enforcement, regulation and compliance to the local level. The Office of Human Rights (OHR) established the Language Access Program to lead the implementation of the local Act. As we prepare to recognize the 5th Anniversary of the Act, we also celebrate the many successes of the Program over the years, especially the growth during FY08 and thank you for assisting us in that growth.

The OHR will continue to assist you in assessing your individual entity's language access needs in order to be in compliance with local and federal statutes. Please contact the Language Access Program at (202) 727-4559 for more information and/or to request technical assistance. You can also request Language Access Training for your staff free of charge from OHR at www.ohr.dc.gov and fill out the "Training Request Form."

As the nation's capital, we have a responsibility to create and uphold an equal standard of service for all individuals regardless of language spoken. We appreciate your participation and leadership in this effort. We ask that you continue to keep in mind the critical services our government has to offer and ensure that LEP/NEP participants of your agencies' programs, activities, and services receive the same information, care and attention as those who are English proficient.

Sincerely,



Gustavo F. Velasquez
Director